UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/128
S/1998/425
26 May 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
Item 35 of the preliminary list*
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED
NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION
OF AFRICAN UNITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 22 May 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the message from the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin, to the Heads of State and Government and the peoples of Africa on the occasion of Africa Day (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under item 35 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

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ANNEX

Message from the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin, to the Heads of State and Government and the peoples of Africa on the occasion of Africa Day, 20 May 1998

On the occasion of Africa Day, a major political event for the whole continent, I send my warmest and most sincere congratulations to the Heads of State and Government and to the peoples of Africa.

The Russian Federation holds in high regard its traditional bonds of friendship with Africa. We note with great satisfaction the increasing role that African States are playing in world affairs and their contribution to international economic integration and to strengthening the universal security system.

This year's festivities are particularly important in light of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which will be celebrated on 25 May. The efforts of this all-Africa forum to prevent and settle conflicts and ensure sustainable development and prosperity for the whole continent have gained recognition in the world. I cannot fail to mention the role of OAU in solving serious humanitarian problems and the fruitful results of its activities in the areas of regional integration and progress towards an African economic community.

We welcome the transformations in African countries aimed at strengthening the democratic foundations of political life. These are being implemented in light of national and historical experience and are founded on the age-old wisdom of the peoples of the continent. But at the same time, they reflect the universally recognized principles of contemporary society, respect for human rights and freedom of political choice.

Russians are alarmed by the ethnic conflicts, the humanitarian crises, the natural disasters, the diseases and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people which persist in Africa. It is the Russian Federation's resolute intent to continue to play an active part in the international community's efforts to provide African countries with comprehensive assistance in overcoming these adverse phenomena and in solving their urgent problems.

I wish to stress that, for the Russian Federation, close bonds with Africa are not just a glorious page in history: they are a reality today. We are firmly determined to increase cooperation with the States of the African continent in the most diverse areas, from politics to economics and culture.

I am sure that this openness on the part of the Russian Federation will continue to be perceived by our African partners in a spirit of friendship, trust and respect and that it will be embodied in practical cooperation.

I wish the peoples of Africa happiness, prosperity and success on their road to all-round development, in the conviction that Africa will enter the twenty-first century stable and flourishing.